

Preston Retreat
Twentieth and Hamilton Streets
Philadelphia (North Philadelphia)
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1736

HABS
PA,
PHILA,
480 -

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PRESTON RETREAT

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Location: Twentieth and Hamilton Streets, Philadelphia (North Philadelphia), Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania.

The Preston Retreat was a maternity hospital for indigent expectant women. An endowment from the estate of Dr. Jonas Preston (died 1836) established the hospital in 1836. Construction was initiated in 1837 and finished in 1840. (Thomas U. Walter was the architect). Due to a problem with the funds, the hospital did not open until 1866. The hospital closed its doors in 1960 when it merged with the Pennsylvania Hospital. The hospital was demolished in May of 1963.

The information below is copied from variously dated fire insurance surveys for the hospital building. These surveys record original construction and subsequent physical changes, from 1840 to 1909.

"Survey for the Managers of the Preston Retreat of their Four Story Brick & Marble Building, Situate, on the North Side of Hamilton Street, between 20th & 21st Streets.

Dimensions, Front 106 feet. Depth 88 feet.

First or Basement Story. in 6 Rooms & 2 Entries, Fourteen 16 light Windows 11 x 14, four 24 light do 10 x 16 & four 12 light do 8 x 10 - all double hung - and plain inside shutters to all the large ones - outside panel shutters to the four small Windows, 4 Wood Mantels, 10 Closets, doors & Windows finished with Grecian Mouldings, 2 plain Stairs down to Cellar, 2 Copper Boilers & furnace in Wash House. Sash & Wire Work to all the Cellar Windows. A Verandah on the East & West side enclosed with Venetian blinds, Wash house floor paved with Brick, Ventilating flues in the Center of Ceilings in the Wards of each Story. The Lock all American Made in the building.

Second or Principal Story. in 6 Rooms & 3 Entries, Moulded base, Windows cased, yellow pine floor, & finished with plain pilasters, large Stucco Cornice, 6 Marble Mantels, 7 Closets, A Brick fire proof Vestibule in front Entry, fourteen 24 light Windows 11 x 17 & four 12 light do 8 x 12 all double hung - plain inside shutters to large ones, Verandah extending around the East, West & North sides of building enclosed with Venetian Rolling blinds, large privies at the Ends of Verandah. In Entry a Continued rail Stairs, Mahogany Rail, turned ballusters, 2 large Scrolls & Curtail Steps, Steps 5/4 heart pine. One 12 light Window on half space 11 x 17 double hung.

Third Story. in 6 Rooms & 3 Entries, Moulded base, Windows cased, yellow pine floor, doors and windows finished with Mouldings, 6 Marble Mantels, 8 Closets, fifteen 16 light Windows, 11 x 16 - plain Inside shutters, Six 12 light do 8 x 12 all double hung - Verandah on East, West & North sides & privies at the ends finished as Second Story, long fancy wood tops to the Brick piers of Verandahs.

Fourth Story. in 10 Rooms & 2 Entries, Moulded base, Windows cased, yellow pine floor & Mouldings, 6 Wood Mantels, 4 Closets, Seventeen 8 light Windows 11 x 12 plain inside shutters. 17 Small skylights in the Roof - hung with hinged & Iron Cranks to hoist them. The East, West & North side of this Story is frame Work, Weather boarded, with White pine plank & finished with facia, Cornice, Architrave &c Corresponding with the Marble do in front. The front of the building finished all with Marble, Viz Cornice, facia, and a Portico with Steps, Cheek Blocks &c. The East & West Gable ends Rough Cast & painted & the brick Work in the rear painted. Roof covered with Copper & Copper Conductors, Marble coping to Chimney tops. On the roof is a Neat Octagon Cupola in the Center, With Windows on each side. Roof covered with Copper, Electric Conductor, A plain white pine Stairs extending from 4th Story to Cupola, and an opening in Center with Rail & ballusters around - & a floor on each side of heart pine. A door from the Cupola to Roof of House.

This Survey copied from one filed in Office of the Fire Association Co. & Made Sept 5th 1840 - "

"Alterations Made in building since Sept 5th 1840 -
Fixtures for Warming the building by Steam upon Golds Patent, with Registers for Heat & Ventilation in each Story. Range, Circulating Boiler, Iron Sink & Hot & Cold Water introduced. Dumb Waiter with speaking Tube attached leading to the 3rd Story. Gas pipes & Bell fixtures in each Story. One of the rooms in 2nd Story divided by board partitions into 3 Apartments, 2 Iron Bath Tubs & 2 Water closets, with Hot & Cold Water, & Iron Wash Stand. A similar division & fixtures Made in the third Story for Bath Rooms &c-

A Bath Tub lined with lead in Tank Room in 4th Story & Cold Water introduced. One Room in the Third Story divided into 2 Apartments by board partition. All the Apartments of the Privies & Water Closets connected by Terra Cota pipes, with the Culvert & drain pipes in the Yard, the Water introduced into the Privies in the 1st Story. The Walls of 1st, 2nd & 3rd Stories painted & the Ceiling of Parlour, Office & Vestibule frescoed -

[Nov 22 1865]

George C. Justus
Surveyor"

"The following sums Insured in the following Offices.
\$10,000 in the Fire Association \$10,000 in the American \$10,000 in
the Philad Contrib \$10,000 in the Franklin

The water closet & iron bath tubs formerly in building have been removed to brick towers at north east and north west corners of building. all the necessary traps, ventilating pipes &c.

Sides of Porchs, have been enclosed by planed & groved diagonal boards at bottom. sash hung on pivots with [rod ?] above one sash with one light of glasss 36 by 38', four ditto 18 by 17' & top sash one light 36 by 38'.

Windows & Doors in Wall opening into Vault under front porch have been bricked up. & iron door openings in the cellar. this part now used for storage of straw for beds which is allowed.

Alfred Ogden
Surveyor
Dec. 22nd 1888."

[Policy 7150]
M.A.

"Survey of the Preston Retreat 20th & Hamilton Sts.
The following alterations have been made to the Original Building which remains the same in size and shape. The whole building has been remodeled. The old roof and cupola have been taken off. the upper story has been increased 3 feet in heighth. A new slag roof with copper flashings, capping, and copper skylights put on. A new cupola of iron and concrete similar in shape and size to the old one has been constructed. A brick fire escape tower has been erected on the east and west sides of the building. A brick elevator shaft in the centre of the building from the basement to the roof. New ash pit in cellar. Electric wiring has been installed. All the plumbing and heating has been revised. New window frames & sash in place of the old ones. Alterations to partitions and stairs. The inside shutters altered - the solid Jamb shutters remain the center shutters replaced with blinds. The building is plastered throughout the walls painted and glossed the woodwork painted white and enameled. All underdrained New Maple and Tile floors. Brass and bronze hardware. The porches on the North, East & West sides of the building are enclosed with sash etc.

Basement

Patients reception, Sitting & Dining rooms. Janitors room
Nurses dining room. Drying rooms. Kitchen. Scullery. one large room. Elevator, Corridors, Stair hall, Toilet room, Dumbwaiter,

closets, clothes chute, and Fire escape towers.

One large Oak refrigerator with 5 apartments (McCray Maker.)
One new three Oven portable range No 28 with cement hearth (Long Maker) one Iron fire proof safe built in the brick wall (Made by the York safe & lock Co) Two new wood and sash partitions of white pine boards with pilaster finish. paneled. Two sash doors one Lt each 17" by 30". Casement sash 4 Lts. 15" by 56". 2 Ditto 15" by 39". 6 Ditto 15 1/2" by 56". Two transoms 2 Lts each 21" by 22" all Am fig glass. New Maple floors. Walls painted

First Story.

Vestibule, Hall, Office, Matrons dressing room
Ward B Isolation ward Nurses reception room, corridors, Two
bathrooms, Large closet. Elevator, clothes chute. Fire towers.
Vestibule has Marble tile floor walls plastered. Brick Elevator
shaft with Iron sliding sash doors on each floor. One electric
passenger Elevator (Otis standard type) with car made of rolled sheet
steel with all the safety devices electric lights etc. Two fire
escape towers with platforms railings etc with iron stairs. plain
closed string of cast iron. treads and platforms roughened solid
square posts 3" by 3". Balustrade 3'2" high 2" pipe hand rail also
a pipe rail on the wall. The railings on the balconies 3'6" high
Made of 5/8" round iron bars. spaced 3" centres. with top and bottom
rail 1 1/2" by 1 3/4". Concrete floors

The porches on the North, East & West sides of the building are now
enclosed with tongue & grooved boards 3 feet high with base, sill &
Cap. above the boards are new window frames sash and sash doors all
sash D.H. with chain. Two windows 36 Lts each 11 1/4" x 19 3/4". 4
Ditto 42 Lts each 10 1/2" by 19 1/2". 2 Ditto 36 Lts each 11 3/4" by
10 3/4". One sash door 6 Lts 9" by 18". one Ditto 4 Lts 14" by
15", one Ditto 6 Lts 12 1/2" by 17". 2 side sash 3 Lts 10" by 16".
2 Ditto 6 Lts each 10 1/2" by 10 3/4". One transom 21 Lts 10" x
19". One Ditto 9 Lts 11" by 23" all Am glass. 12 1/2 moulded base
with a quarter round along the floor..

Stairways

The Main stairway remains the same as in former survey
Open stairs from the first floor to the basement with yellow pine
Steps and risers. 5" by 5" square Newel 1 1/2" by 1 1/2 square
balusters. 2" by 3" hand rail moulded also hand rail on the wall.
Closet under this stairway was sash door. one Lt 20" by 23 am glass
Open winding stairs from the upper floor to the Cupola. Yellow pine
steps and risers. balusters 1 1/2" by 1 1/2" posts 6" by 6" 3 1/2" by
3 1/2" x 4" by 4", 3 1/2" hand rail all yellow pine

Second Story

Wards C. D. E. F. G. One sleeping room Infants bathroom patients
wash room. Two bathrooms. Corridors, Closets, Elevator, clothes
chute. Fire escape tower.

The porches of this story are enclosed same as first story with tongue & grooved boards 30" high with base sill & Cap. with new window frames sash & sash doors above. 6 windows 24 Lts each 11 1/2" by 20 5 Ditto 28 Lts each 10 1/2" by 20 1/2". Two side sash 8 Lts each 10 1/2" by 20". 2 Ditto 6 Lts 8 1/2" by 15". One Ditto 2 Lts 8" by 16 1/2". One Ditto 6 Lts 12 1/2" by 16 1/2. one sash door 4 Lts 14" by 15". 2 Ditto 4 Lts 12 1/2" by 15". One Ditto 4 Lts 11" by 15 one transom 6 Lts 12" by 16", one Ditto 14 Lts 11" by 13", one Ditto 16 Lts 11 1/2 by 15 1/2" all am glass. 8/2" Moulded base with quarter round along floor The enclosed porch on the east side of this story has a tile floor. the West wall is tiled 6 feet high with glazed tile. 8 enameled washstand basins 12" by 15" with 12" Splash H&C water. One porcelin slop senk 20" x 24" on Marble slabs. All Open Nickel plated plumbing (Patients washrooms).

Infants Bathroom.

Two porcelain baby bathtubs with nickel plated covers and fixtures. all Open plumbing. this room has cement floor. The fixtures in the two bathrooms on this floor are the old the old ones reset with new plumbing.

Third story

Solarium, Head Nurses room, Nurses dormitory, Nurses bathroom Nurses clothes room. Maids dormitory. Maids bathroom Sterilizing room. Etherizing room. Two delivery rooms. Laboratory. Store room. Corridors. Elevator. Clothes chute and Fire escape towers. Nurses clothe room 6 closets constructed of slats. with slab doors. all shelved

Corridors

One large frame with 9 sash 18" by 27" glass on pivots. in the ceiling over Main Stairway. also one large ventilator 6 fold inside shutters. 8 inch base.

Copper framed skylights on the roof with rough wired glass. One single skylight with 6 Lts 19" by 73", One Ditto 19" by 57". one Ditto 18 Lts 18 1/2" by 55". one Ditto 2 Lts 21 1/2 by 61 1/2. one Ditto 6 Lts 19" by 83" one Double skylight - 18 Lts cut to pattern. 8 Lts 20 by 25, 4 Ditto 21" by 51" 4 Ditto 25" by 51". 2 Ditto 24" by 51". One Double skylight with 32 Lts as follows 8-18" by 23". 8.-18" by 46". 8-24" by 48". -8-24" by 45". One Ditto with 18 Lts. 8-20" by 24" 8-20" by 48". 2-17" by 50. One flat skylight with 4 Lts 20" by 76" 2 Ditto one Lt each 24" by 26". 2 Ditto 24" by 24" Nine large copper Ventilators (Iona)

Ventilator over elevator shaft with copper bars and galvanized iron slats with thick glass lights 3 1/2" by 3 1/2" in the cement top

The Chimneys are capped with marble

Plumbing

Porcelain water-closets (Omer standard). Wash basins porcelain enameled corner basins (Yale). Bathtubs roll rim Shawmont standard porcelain enameled. Nickel plated fixtures of good quality
Two large iron tanks supported by iron beams on the brick wall in the rear of the building under the roof
The architect for these alterations was E. V. Seele Real Estate Trust Bldg

Walter Tryday Surveyor
June 14th 1909"

Edited by: Susan McCown
Architectural Historian
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Survey
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